

STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE

1.29.01

Scheppe Boehm Associates
32 Springstreet 1
New York, NY 10012

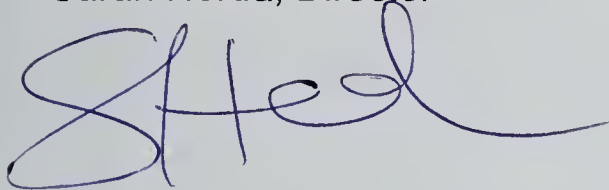
Dear Luca, Florian and Wolfgang,

I am pleased to accept your proposal concerning 'EndCommercial' for an exhibition in the Storefront gallery. EndCommercial's remarkable research into the subtle relationships informing New York City's urban fabric is well suited for a Storefront exhibition, especially as much of this research was conducted in our immediate vicinity.

Currently the exhibition is scheduled to open on Thursday, June 27th 2002 and will extend until Saturday, August 3rd. I look forward to the book's publication and to collaborating with you on the exhibition.

Best Regards,

Sarah Herda, Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SHeda', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2002

Contact: Sarah Herda, 212.431.5795

Info@storefrontnews.org

ENDCOMMERCIAL®

Florian Böhm, Luca Pizzaroni, Wolfgang Scheppe

July 18 - August 25, 2002

The exhibition ENDCOMMERCIAL® documents impromptu strategies of making ends meet in the contemporary city. Both an index and a story of urban phenomena and street life, this project portrays usually marginalized but ubiquitous objects and patterns that define the city's behavior and structure. This selection of over 1000 photographs is an inventory of the overlooked, organized into a multivalent classification system. Florian Böhm, Luca Pizzaroni and Wolfgang Scheppe have extracted Endcommercial® from their project Digital Slum, a body of ongoing photographic research that includes over 60,000 digital photos taken of cities on a daily basis since 1997.

Although New York was the primary site of research for ENDCOMMERCIAL®, this lexicon of images illustrates phenomena that could exist anywhere: folding tables and blankets become temporary shops for street vendors, plastic bags indicate broken parking meters, and empty shops anticipate future development. Through empirical and visual means, ENDCOMMERCIAL® unveils the contradictions and coexistence of different social and economic forces shaping urban life.

ENDCOMMERCIAL® is *"a declaration of love and a visual guide to New York –its street life, its buildings, its iconography, its almost secret Big City life details and mysteries, all recorded with love which is the basis of all photography that really matters"*

Jonas Mekas

ENDCOMMERCIAL® *"locates the soul of New York City in its details—encoded into broken bicycles, markings on pavement, words on signs, on concrete, on buildings, on people...Here no distinctions are made between garbage and luxury, advertising and handwriting..."*

Jim Jarmusch

Böhm, Scheppe and Pizzaroni are based in New York, Munich and Venice.

More Information: <http://www.endcommercial.com>

Day to Day: <http://www.digitalslum.com>

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Founded in 1982, Storefront for Art and Architecture is a nonprofit organization committed to the advancement of innovative positions in architecture, art and design.

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

For more information:

Storefront for Art and Architecture

97 Kenmare Street, New York, 10012

New York NY 10012

Phone: 212. 431 5795

Fax: 212. 431 5755

Email: info@storefrontnews.org

Directions:

Storefront is located at 97 Kenmare Street between Mulberry Street and Cleveland Place near Lafayette Street.

Subway:

6 to Spring Street, N/R to Prince Street, and F/V to Broadway-Lafayette.

ENDCOMMERCIAL®

Taking the city of New York as its point of departure, the photographic project ENDCOMMERCIAL® addresses urban space, dissecting and reassembling it into something very different than a sum of the city's parts. Seemingly incidental things recur again and again, giving rise to a rhythm which is both the heartbeat of an organism and the cognitive means of a language. The photographs offer surprising analogies and connections. Image by image, the inner grammar of an urban subtext is pieced together. Block by city block, principles of order and the living evidence of an economic biotope are revealed and documented. Writing on the wall; signs on the street; codes, symbols, and fragments; the authorship of the anonymous; traces of use in public space, and the people who use it. The surprise the pictures hold is the sudden insight into the difference between seeing something frequently and registering it fully.

Endcommercial - Reading the City

Edited by Scheppe Böhm Associates,
photography by Florian Böhm, Luca Pizzaroni,
Wolfgang Scheppe

544 pp., more than 1000 color illus.,
17 x 23 cm, hardcover
\$ 39.95 € 39.80 [D], £ 29.95
Haje Cantz Publishers, ISBN 3-7757-1221-6
www.hatjecantz.de, sales@hatjecantz.de

September 2002 (Europe)
October (USA)

EndCommercial® is a visual research of urban street territory, compiling signs, objects and codes in their grammatical relation to unveil social conditions and contradictions embedded within the subject matter. It is a comprehensive volume dedicated to reading Code Street at the end of an economic era.

Between urban structures and individual existence organic and improvised systems emerge. Situated beyond the sophisticated economy and below a level of recognition they are familiar yet paradoxically invisible: the ordinariness of certain objects is so ubiquitous that they fail to evoke reflection. Considering N.Y.C. as a paradigm, this array of informal and empirical photographs demonstrates the distinction between an unconscious visualization of singularities and an intelligent perception of generality.

EndCommercial® is a reference tool engaged in the thoughtful renewal of our visual vocabulary, opposing the omnipresent iconography we process everyday: pictures initiated by commerciality and subjected to fictionalisation.

EndCommercial® stands for three things at once:

It stands for the low-end of economy which exists in self-organized autopoietic subsystems.
It stands for the fact that almost every object gains its end in commercial interests. And stands for the sudden cessation of commerciality in moments of economical crisis.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

1998

PHILOSOPHY 101

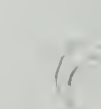
101

PHILOSOPHY 101 is a course designed to introduce students to the basic concepts and methods of philosophy. The course covers a wide range of topics, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. Students will be expected to read and discuss primary texts, as well as to write and defend their own arguments.

The course is divided into two main sections. The first section, which covers the first half of the semester, focuses on the foundations of philosophy. This includes a study of the works of Plato and Aristotle, as well as a discussion of the development of modern philosophy. The second section, which covers the second half of the semester, focuses on contemporary philosophy. This includes a study of the works of Wittgenstein, Quine, and other 20th-century philosophers.

Students who complete this course with a grade of C- or better will be eligible to enroll in Philosophy 102, which is a more advanced course in philosophy. Students who complete this course with a grade of B- or better will be eligible to enroll in Philosophy 103, which is a course in the history of philosophy. Students who complete this course with a grade of A- or better will be eligible to enroll in Philosophy 104, which is a course in the philosophy of language.

For more information about this course, please contact the Philosophy Department at the University of Chicago. You can reach us by phone at (773) 936-7200, by fax at (773) 936-7201, or by email at philosophy@uchicago.edu. Our website is located at <http://www.uchicago.edu/philosophy>.



Endcommercial®: Reading the City
Florian Böhm, Luca Pizzaroni, Wolfgang Scheppe
(Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 544 p., illustrated, ISBN 3775712216

By Victor Margolin

The sheer volume of photographs - approximately 1,000 - that Florian Böhm, Luca Pizzaroni, and Wolfgang Scheppe include in their book *Endcommercial®: Reading the City*

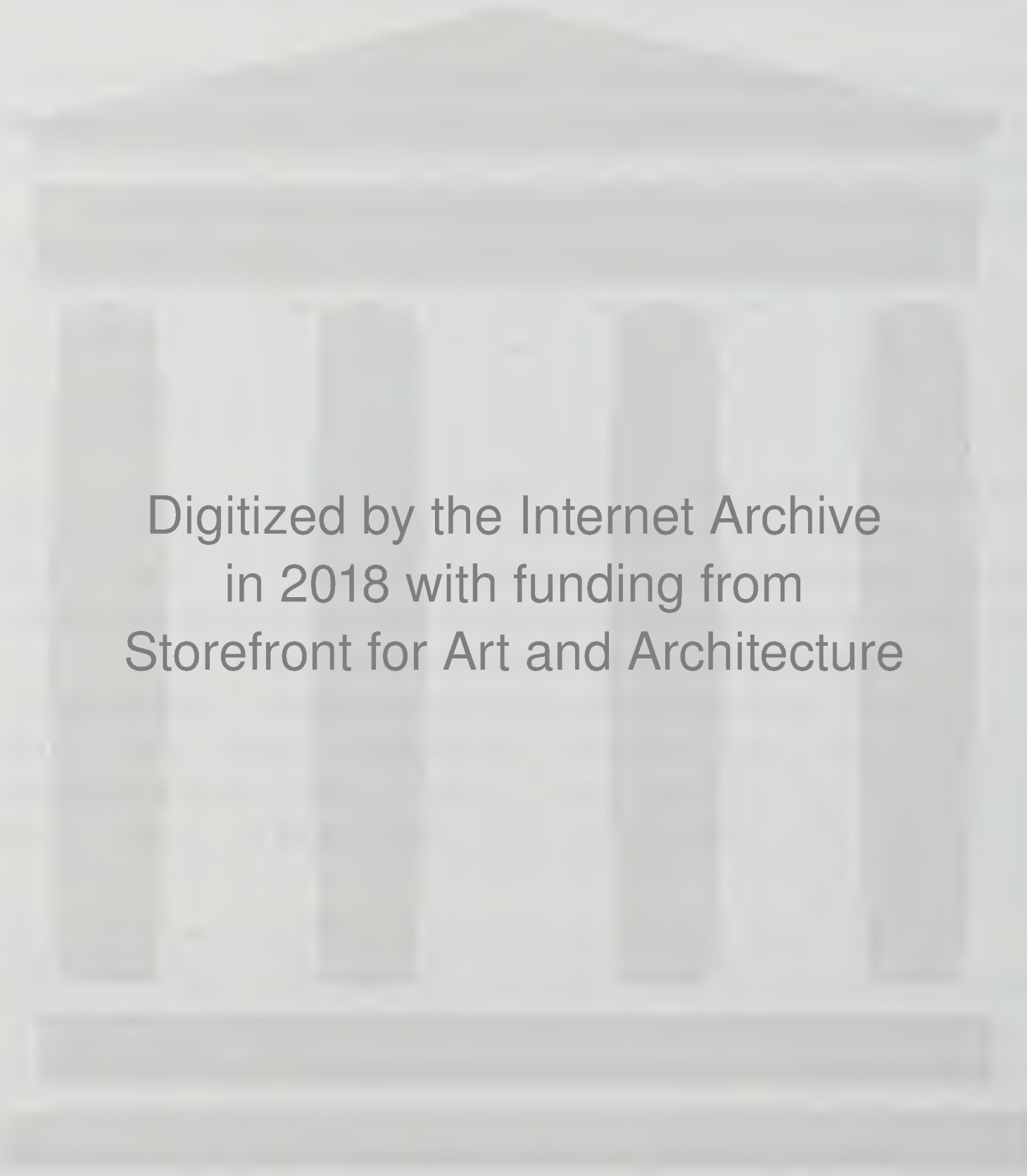
challenges the conventions of urban representation that have prevailed in the history of photography. Rather than characterize a city or cities with a series of iconic images that highlight important landmarks or distinctive scenes, the three authors present a view of urban life that focuses on the generic, the anonymous, and the inconsequential.

The majority of the photographs are from New York, although some depict other cities as well. The differences are not evident in the photographs, however, since the authors went to great pains to emphasize the commonality of daily life in cities around the globe. From my initial reading of the book, I assumed that all the photographs were from New York and only learned otherwise from an interview with Wolfgang Scheppe that was posted on the authors's website, *endcommercial.com*.

At the time of the book's publication, the authors, who shared in the photography, had approximately 60,000 images in their archive. That number has now risen to more than 100,000. The documentation is ongoing and selections from daily shoots are posted on a second website *digitalslum.com*. As Scheppe explains in an interview at *endcommercial.com*, the project could not have been undertaken without the advent of digital photography, which made possible the inexpensive production and storage of so many images. From their digital database, the authors not only generated the pictures for the book but also for an exhibition that has been shown in New York as well as a number of cities in Europe.

Scheppe is quite clear, however, in his and his collaborators' preference for the book as the principal medium of display because it emphasizes the aggregate of images rather than privileging any single one. Like the Russian Constructivist photographer, Alexander Rodchenko, who believed that multiple snapshots of Lenin rather than a single formal portrait best captured the Soviet leader's personality, Scheppe, Böhm, and Pizzaroni polemically reject the iconic urban photograph in favor of a mass of seemingly mundane images that, in their entirety, constitute a fascinating display of city life at its most ordinary.

Scheppe, Böhm, and Pizzaroni approach the documentation of a city as a scientist would an ecosystem, the difference being that they invent their own taxonomy while the



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Storefront for Art and Architecture

https://archive.org/details/200207_endcommer00flor

scientist relies on an existing and widely agreed-upon order to classify the ecosystem's flora and fauna. The authors's working method was to shoot first, according to whatever interested them, and develop a taxonomy afterwards. Hence, they not only discovered new components of urban life but also sought to re-invent our understanding of how cities function. Their project was guided by a determination to expose the hidden or otherwise invisible actions, processes, and communication codes that constitute the fabric of daily life for large numbers of people. They show little interest in the lives of the rich and famous that Tom Wolfe exposed in *Bonfire of the Vanities*, except to feature a section on stylish store facades, which they designate as "corporate monuments."

Although their choices of what to photograph were subjective and intuitive, they give their taxonomy a pseudo-scientific veneer by presenting it as a corporate organization chart comprised of separate boxes connected hierarchically by lines. They use the same visual rhetoric for the title page and table of contents as well. The system actually works rather neatly as a means to visualize the conceptual framework within which they locate the separate photographic sections. In the title spread for each section, they highlight in black the box that designates the photographs for that section and link it to the two boxes that show where the section is located within the larger conceptual hierarchy. The rhetorical assertion here is that all the photographic groupings are fragments of a composite of urban life as the authors want to present it.

Through the terms they use for their principal categories, *system*, *order*, and *identity*, the authors present a taxonomic structure that appears to be sociologically complete. One is inclined to read the term *system* as the totality of urban processes, institutions, and structures much in the way that one understands Talcott Parsons' attempt to produce a comprehensive macro-theory of social organization in the 1950s. *Identity*, too, is a term that characterizes a central problem in sociological discourse, while *order* summons up an Enlightenment vision of proper social arrangements.

The first hint that the authors' view of the city is anything but an Enlightenment one is revealed in the titles of some of the sub-categories, *dysfunctional speech act*, *alternative media*, and *habitual reinterpretation*. Within the first category are sections of photographs that depict signs with missing letters, stores that have been abandoned, and billboards with no messages on them. As alternative media, the authors consider car doors on which letters spelling out personal names or names of small businesses have been stenciled or glued; labels with messages that have been pasted on doors, fire boxes, and other surfaces; and signs that have been tacked or pasted on poles of various kinds. By '*habitual reinterpretation*' the authors have in mind the discovery of new uses for objects such as plastic milk crates that are frequently appropriated for seating; city

standpipes that assume the same purpose; and tattered chairs of all kinds that fill the streets of neighborhoods with an active public life.

Perusing these and other photos, one comes to understand that the authors have not organized their images according to a macro-theory of social order. Instead, they are more interested in how people cope at the street level. They make reference in their diagram to *autopoiesis*, a term devised by the Chilean biologists Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, who argue that an organism's first obligation is to maintain its own inner nature, which it does by taking in what it needs from the environment around it. According to Maturana and Varela, this principle is true biologically as well as socially and can apply equally to an amoeba or a corporation. What Scheppe, Böhm, and Pizzaroni show us is how ordinary people adapt the city's resources to their own needs in ways that are highly improvisatory. With this understanding, we can re-read their principal organizing categories - *system*, *order*, and *identity* – as referring to a microsystem of personal experience rather than a macrosystem of civic life.

There is considerable irony in the relation between many of the sub-category titles and the images they encompass. Property, for example, is represented by photographs of bicycle frames in various states of disrepair that are chained to street posts. The category is also represented by close-up photographs of taped objects, suggesting the dynamic between dysfunctional things and jerry-rigged attempts to fix them. Widening the frame, the authors provide photographs of shop proprietors, seated on stools, keeping an eye on their merchandise. In the sub-category, *commerce*, they contrast a section depicting the facades of upscale stores like Fendi, Prada, and Gucci with photos of street vendors and hawkers whose own emporia are usually nothing more than a folding table or a tarp on the ground. The irony is particularly marked in the series of photos depicting plastic A-frames that support wooden crossbars, which function as barriers. However, a number of the A-frames depicted are either broken or out of use, suggesting a metaphor of resistance to authority. This reading is strengthened by the placement of this section as the opening one of the book, thus leading off the narrative of urban survival with a critical take on a class of artifacts that signify social control.

Another form of irony is the authors' choice of terms denoting high or commercial art – *sculpture*, *design*, *architecture*, and *typography* – to designate improvised, accidental, or inconsequential objects they find in the street. As sculpture they identify abandoned bicycle frames; autopoietic design depicts the improvisatory use of plastic crates and standpipes for seating, improvised stands put up by street vendors, and shopping carts appropriated by trash pickers, vendors, and homeless people. As architecture they include transitory structures such as plastic A-frame barrier supports and blue tarps that are used to cover a multitude of containers. And finally vernacular typography is represented by some atypical examples: street names

carved in cement, painted drain holes, raised letters on steel plates, and stickers pasted on lamp posts.

What the authors present to the reader is a purportedly coherent visual and material culture comprised of objects and messages that can easily escape the notice of those who are not actually involved in it. For those who can read them, the city is constantly transmitting signs and signals. Abandoned buildings tell us that a neighborhood is in decay; police barriers indicate that a public demonstration or event has just happened or is about to happen; notices posted subversively on public property advertise everything from raves to dog walkers. It is both intriguing and informative to view serial examples of these mostly invisible signs.

Given that the book, with 1,000 photographs, is already a weighty tome, the authors devise an intriguing strategy for readers to access additional information related to their project. By establishing a website for interviews, reviews, and other commentary, the authors invite those interested to participate in an ongoing discourse about the book. Likewise, they can share the visual continuity of the project by checking out new photographs at another site devoted only to that purpose. The open-endedness of the documentation and the discourse about it are far better suited to the authors' processual reading of the city than to a more definitive representation of city life. Not only have they invented a new reading of urban experience, they have also devised innovative tools to facilitate it.

END

Bio:

Victor Margolin is Professor of Design History at the University of Illinois, Chicago. His most recent books are *The Politics of the Artificial: Essays on Design and Design Studies* and *Culture is Everywhere: The Museum of Contemporary Art*.

